

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
HOUSTON DIVISION

KIRK MACKEY,)	
)	
Plaintiff,)	
)	CIVIL ACTION
vs.)	
)	Case No.
LTD WESTHEIMER LLC,)	
)	
Defendant.)	

COMPLAINT

COMES NOW, KIRK MACKEY, by and through the undersigned counsel, and files this, his Complaint against Defendant, LTD WESTHEIMER LLC, pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. § 12181 *et seq.* (“ADA”) and the ADA’s Accessibility Guidelines, 28 C.F.R. Part 36 (“ADAAG”). In support thereof, Plaintiff respectfully shows this Court as follows:

JURISDICTION

1. This Court has original jurisdiction over the action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1343 for Plaintiff’s claims pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 12181 *et seq.*, based upon Defendant’s failure to remove physical barriers to access and violations of Title III of the ADA.

PARTIES

2. Plaintiff, KIRK MACKEY (hereinafter “Plaintiff”) is, and has been at all times relevant to the instant matter, a natural person residing in Houston, Texas (Harris County).

3. Plaintiff is disabled as defined by the ADA.

4. Plaintiff is required to traverse in a wheelchair and is substantially limited in performing one or more major life activities, including but not limited to: walking and standing.

5. Plaintiff uses a wheelchair for mobility purposes.

6. Plaintiff is also an independent advocate of the rights of similarly situated disabled persons and is a “tester” for the purpose of enforcing Plaintiff’s civil rights, monitoring, determining and ensuring whether places of public accommodation are in compliance with the ADA. His motivation to return to a location, in part, stems from a desire to utilize ADA litigation to make Plaintiff’s community more accessible for Plaintiff and others; and pledges to do whatever is necessary to create the requisite standing to confer jurisdiction upon this Court so an injunction can be issued correcting the numerous ADA violations on this property, including returning to the Property within six months after it is accessible (“Advocacy Purposes”).

7. Defendant, LTD WESTHEIMER LLC (hereinafter “LTD WESTHEIMER LLC”), is a Texas limited liability corporation that transacts business in the State of Texas and within this judicial district.

8. Defendant, LTD WESTHEIMER LLC, may be properly served with process for service via its Registered Agent, to wit: c/o Liem Dang, Registered Agent, 10080 Bellaire Blvd., Suite 220, Houston, TX 77072.

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

9. On or about January 5, 2022, Plaintiff was a customer at “El K’iche Bakery” a business located at 6445 Westheimer Road, Houston, TX 77057, referenced herein as “El K’iche Bakery”. Attached is a receipt documenting Plaintiff’s purchase. *See* Exhibit 1. Attached is a photograph of Plaintiff’s visit to the Property. *See* Exhibit 2.

10. Defendant, LTD WESTHEIMER LLC, is the owner or co-owner of the real property and improvements that El K’iche Bakery is situated upon and that is the subject of this action, referenced herein as the “Property.”

11. Plaintiff lives 11 miles from the Property.

12. Plaintiff's access to the business(es) located 6445 Westheimer Road, Houston, TX 77057, Harris County Property Appraiser's identification number 0410280040161 and 0410280040164 ("the Property"), and/or full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, foods, drinks, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations offered therein were denied and/or limited because of his disabilities, and he will be denied and/or limited in the future unless and until Defendant, LTD WESTHEIMER LLC, is compelled to remove the physical barriers to access and correct the ADA violations that exist at the Property, including those set forth in this Complaint.

13. Although the Property contains two parcels of land, both parcels should be considered one "site" for purposes of this lawsuit as both parcels are owned and operated by Defendant, LTD WESTHEIMER LLC.

14. Although the Property contains two parcels of land, both parcels should be considered one "site" for purposes of this lawsuit as a single building (public accommodation) is on both parcels within the Property.

15. Although the Property contains two parcels of land, both parcels should be considered one "site" for purposes of this lawsuit as both parcels share a single parking lot attempting to provide an accessible route to all accessible entrances of the Property.

16. Although the Property contains two parcels of land, both parcels should be considered one "site" for purposes of this lawsuit as there is a large sign by the main road marketing the tenants of the Property which contain businesses that are located on both parcels of land on the Property.

17. Defendant, LTD WESTHEIMER LLC, as property owner, is responsible for

complying with the ADA for both the exterior portions and interior portions of the Property. Even if there is a lease between Defendant, LTD WESTHEIMER LLC, and the tenants allocating responsibilities for ADA compliance within the unit the tenant operates, that lease is only between the property owner and the tenant and does not abrogate the Defendant's independent requirement to comply with the ADA for the entire Property it owns, including the interior portions of the Property which are public accommodations. *See* 28 CFR § 36.201(b).

18. Plaintiff has visited the Property once before as a customer and advocate for the disabled. Plaintiff intends on revisiting the Property within six months after the barriers to access detailed in this Complaint are removed and the Property is accessible again. The purpose of the revisit is to be a return customer, to determine if and when the Property is made accessible and to maintain standing for this lawsuit for Advocacy Purposes.

19. Plaintiff intends on revisiting the Property to purchase goods and/or services as a return customer living in the near vicinity as well as for Advocacy Purposes, but does not intend to re-expose himself to the ongoing barriers to access and engage in a futile gesture of visiting the public accommodation known to Plaintiff to have numerous and continuing barriers to access.

20. Plaintiff travelled to the Property as a customer and as an independent advocate for the disabled, personally encountered many barriers to access the Property that are detailed in this Complaint, engaged many barriers, suffered legal harm and legal injury, and will continue to suffer such harm and injury if all the illegal barriers to access present at the Property identified in this Complaint are not removed.

21. Although Plaintiff did not personally encounter each and every barrier to access identified in Plaintiff's Complaint, Plaintiff became aware of all identified barriers prior to filing

the Complaint and because Plaintiff intends on revisiting the Property as a customer and advocate for the disabled within six months or sooner after the barriers to access are removed, it is likely that despite not actually encountering a particular barrier to access on one visit, Plaintiff may encounter a different barrier to access identified in the complaint in a subsequent visit as, for example, one accessible parking space may not be available and he would need to use an alternative accessible parking space in the future on his subsequent visit. As such, all barriers to access identified in the Complaint must be removed in order to ensure Plaintiff will not be exposed to barriers to access and legally protected injury.

22. Plaintiff's inability to fully access the Property and the stores within in a safe manner and in a manner which inhibits the free and equal enjoyment of the goods and services offered at the Property, both now and into the foreseeable future, constitutes an injury in fact as recognized by Congress and is historically viewed by Federal Courts as an injury in fact.

COUNT I
VIOLATIONS OF THE ADA AND ADAAG

23. On July 26, 1990, Congress enacted the Americans with Disabilities Act 42 U.S.C. § 12101 *et seq.*

24. Congress found, among other things, that:

- (i) some 43,000,000 Americans have one or more physical or mental disabilities, and this number is increasing as the population as a whole is growing older;
- (ii) historically, society has tended to isolate and segregate individuals with disabilities, and, despite some improvements, such forms of discrimination against individuals with disabilities continue to be a serious and pervasive social problem;
- (iii) discrimination against individuals with disabilities persists in such critical areas as employment, housing public accommodations, education,

transportation, communication, recreation, institutionalization, health services, voting, and access to public services;

- (iv) individuals with disabilities continually encounter various forms of discrimination, including outright intentional exclusion, the discriminatory effects of architectural, transportation, and communication barriers, overprotective rules and policies, failure to make modifications to existing facilities and practices, exclusionary qualification standards and criteria, segregation, and relegation to lesser service, programs, activities, benefits, jobs, or other opportunities; and
- (v) the continuing existence of unfair and unnecessary discrimination and prejudice denies people with disabilities the opportunity to compete on an equal basis and to pursue those opportunities for which our free society is justifiably famous, and costs the United States billions of dollars in unnecessary expenses resulting from dependency and non-productivity.

42 U.S.C. § 12101(a)(1) - (3), (5) and (9).

25. Congress explicitly stated that the purpose of the ADA was to:

- (i) provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities;
- (ii) provide a clear, strong, consistent, enforceable standards addressing discrimination against individuals with disabilities; and

* * * * *

- (iv) invoke the sweep of congressional authority, including the power to enforce the fourteenth amendment and to regulate commerce, in order to address the major areas of discrimination faced day-to-day by people with disabilities.

42 U.S.C. § 12101(b)(1)(2) and (4).

26. The congressional legislation provided places of public accommodation one and a half years from the enactment of the ADA to implement its requirements.

27. The effective date of Title III of the ADA was January 26, 1992 (or January 26, 1993 if a defendant has 10 or fewer employees and gross receipts of \$500,000 or less). 42 U.S.C. § 12181; 28 C.F.R. § 36.508(a).

28. The Property is a public accommodation and service establishment.

29. Pursuant to the mandates of 42 U.S.C. § 12134(a), on July 26, 1991, the Department of Justice and Office of Attorney General promulgated federal regulations to implement the requirements of the ADA. 28 C.F.R. Part 36.

30. Public accommodations were required to conform to these regulations by January 26, 1992 (or by January 26, 1993 if a defendant has 10 or fewer employees and gross receipts of \$500,000 or less). 42 U.S.C. § 12181 *et seq.*; 28 C.F.R. § 36.508(a).

31. The Property must be, but is not, in compliance with the ADA and ADAAG.

32. Plaintiff has attempted to, and has to the extent possible, accessed the Property in his capacity as a customer at the Property as well as an independent advocate for the disabled, but could not fully do so because of his disabilities resulting from the physical barriers to access, dangerous conditions and ADA violations that exist at the Property that preclude and/or limit his access to the Property and/or the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations offered therein, including those barriers, conditions and ADA violations more specifically set forth in this Complaint.

33. Plaintiff intends to visit the Property again in the very near future as a customer and as an independent advocate for the disabled, in order to utilize all of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations commonly offered at the Property, but will be unable to fully do so because of his disability and the physical barriers to access, dangerous conditions and ADA violations that exist at the Property that preclude and/or limit his access to the Property and/or the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations offered therein, including those barriers, conditions and ADA violations more specifically set forth in this Complaint.

34. Defendant, LTD WESTHEIMER LLC, has discriminated against Plaintiff (and others with disabilities) by denying his access to, and full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations of the Property, as prohibited by, and by failing to remove architectural barriers as required by, 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(iv).

35. Defendant, LTD WESTHEIMER LLC, will continue to discriminate against Plaintiff and others with disabilities unless and until Defendant, LTD WESTHEIMER LLC, is compelled to remove all physical barriers that exist at the Property, including those specifically set forth herein, and make the Property accessible to and usable by Plaintiff and other persons with disabilities.

36. A specific list of unlawful physical barriers, dangerous conditions and ADA violations which Plaintiff experienced and/or observed, or was made aware of prior to the filing of this Complaint, that precluded and/or limited Plaintiff's access to the Property and the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and accommodations of the Property include, but are not limited to:

ACCESSIBLE ELEMENTS:

- (i) In front of Unit 6467, the access aisle to the accessible parking space is not level due to the presence of an accessible ramp in the access aisle in violation of Section 502.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to exit and enter their vehicle while parked at the Property as the lift from the van may rest upon the ramp and create an unlevel surface.

- (ii) In front of Unit 6467, the accessible curb ramp is improperly protruding into the access aisle of the accessible parking space in violation of section 406.5 of the 2010 ADAAG Standards. This barrier to access would make it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to exit and enter their vehicle while parked at the Property as the lift from the van may rest upon the ramp and create an unlevel surface.
- (iii) In front of Unit 6467, due to an inadequate policy of parking lot maintenance or a lack thereof, at least one accessible parking space is not adequately marked so as to adequately gauge the width of accessible parking spaces and the presence of an access aisle and is therefore in violation of Section 502.1 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This violation would make it difficult for Plaintiff to locate an accessible parking space and may cause other vehicles to unknowingly park in the accessible parking space decreasing the available width to Plaintiff.
- (iv) In front of Unit 6467, the accessible parking space is not level due to the presence of accessible ramp side flares in the accessible parking space in violation of Sections 502.4 and 406.5 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to exit and enter their vehicle while parked at the Property as the van may rest upon the ramp and create an unlevel surface for Plaintiff to exit and enter their vehicle.
- (v) Near Unit 6455, the accessible parking space and associated access aisle have a slope in excess of 1:48 in violation of section 502.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards and are not level. This barrier to access would make it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to exit and enter their vehicle while parked at the Property as

Plaintiff's wheelchair may roll down the slope while entering or exiting the vehicle.

- (vi) Near Unit 6455, due to an inadequate policy of parking lot maintenance or a lack thereof, at least one accessible parking space is not adequately marked so as to adequately gauge the width of accessible parking spaces and the presence of an access aisle and is therefore in violation of Section 502.1 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This violation would make it difficult for Plaintiff to locate an accessible parking space and may cause other vehicles to unknowingly park in the accessible parking space decreasing the available width to Plaintiff.
- (vii) In front of El Kiche Bakery, the accessible parking space and associated access aisle have a slope in excess of 1:48 in violation of section 502.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards and are not level. This barrier to access would make it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to exit and enter their vehicle while parked at the Property as Plaintiff's wheelchair may roll down the slope while entering or exiting the vehicle.
- (viii) In front of El Kiche Bakery, the access aisle to the accessible parking space is not level due to the presence of an accessible ramp in the access aisle in violation of Section 502.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to exit and enter their vehicle while parked at the Property as the lift from the van may rest upon the ramp and create an unlevel surface.
- (ix) In front of El Kiche Bakery, the accessible curb ramp is improperly protruding into the access aisle of the accessible parking space in violation of section 406.5

of the 2010 ADAAG Standards. This barrier to access would make it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to exit and enter their vehicle while parked at the Property as the lift from the van may rest upon the ramp and create an unlevel surface.

- (x) In front of El Kiche Bakery, the accessible parking space is not level due to the presence of accessible ramp side flares in the accessible parking space in violation of Sections 502.4 and 406.5 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to exit and enter their vehicle while parked at the Property as the van may rest upon the ramp and create an unlevel surface for Plaintiff to exit and enter their vehicle.
- (xi) The total number of accessible parking spaces is inadequate and is in violation of section 208.2 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. There are 105 parking spaces in the front and at least twenty five in the back parking lot, requiring a minimum of five accessible parking spaces, but there are only four accessible parking spaces on the Property. This violation would make it difficult for Plaintiff to locate an available accessible parking space as such a small number of accessible parking spaces in a large parking lot increases the likelihood of there not being an available accessible parking space.
- (xii) Inside El Kiche Bakery, there are sales and services counters lacking any portion of the counter that has a maximum height of 36 (thirty-six) inches from the finished floor in violation of section 904.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards, all portions of the sales and service counter exceed 36 (thirty-six) inches in height from the finished floor. This barrier to access would make it difficult for Plaintiff

to properly transact business at the Property as Plaintiff is in a wheelchair which makes his height much lower than a standing individual, so a surface with a maximum height of 36 inches above the finished floor is necessary for Plaintiff to sign credit card receipts.

- (xiii) Inside El Kiche Bakery, due to wood paneling at the door threshold to the accessible entrance, there is a doorway threshold with a vertical rise in excess of $\frac{1}{2}$ (one half) inch and does not contain a bevel with a maximum slope of 1:2 in violation of section 404.2.5 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to access the interior of the Property at this location as the vertical rise at the door threshold could potentially cause Plaintiff to tip over when attempting to enter. Moreover, this barrier to access is made more difficult by the fact that it is in the doorway and Plaintiff would be required to hold the door open with one hand while attempt to the “push” the wheel of the wheelchair over the vertical rise.
- (xiv) Due to the barrier to access identified in (xii) above, not all entrance doors and doorways comply with section 404 of the 2010 ADAAG standards, this is a violation of section 206.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards.
- (xv) Defendant fails to adhere to a policy, practice and procedure to ensure that all facilities are readily accessible to and usable by disabled individuals.

EL KICHE BAKERY RESTROOMS

- (xvi) The grab bars/handrails are not positioned in accordance with 609.4 and 604.5 of the 2010 ADAAG standards as the side and rear grab bars are too low. This barrier to access would make it difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled

individual to safely transfer from the wheelchair to the toilet and back to the wheelchair.

- (xvii) The clear floor space of the lavatory is blocked by a policy of placing a trash can in the clear floor space in violation of 606.2 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This would make it difficult for the Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to safely utilize the restroom facilities.
- (xviii) The soap dispenser in the restroom is located higher than 48 inches above the finished floor which is outside the prescribed vertical reach ranges set forth in section 308.2.1 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This made it difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to reach the actionable mechanism of the soap dispenser as individuals in wheelchairs are seated and have significantly less reach range than individuals who stand up.
- (xix) The paper towel dispenser is positioned in front of the restroom sink and protrudes out of the wall more than four inches and has a height less than 80 inches above the floor, as a result, the vertical clearance leading to the restroom sink is blocked in violation of section 307.4 of the 2010 ADAAG Standards. This barrier to access would prevent an individual in a wheelchair from safely accessing the sink in the restroom.
- (xx) As a result of the barrier to access identified in (xviii) above, the sink in the restroom lacks a clear floor space in violation of section 606.2 and 305 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would prevent an individual in a wheelchair from safely accessing the sink in the restroom.
- (xxi) The height of the bottom edge of the reflective surface of the mirror in the

bathroom is above the 40-inch maximum height permitted by Section 603.3 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it difficult for the Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to properly utilize the mirror in the restroom since Plaintiff is sitting in a wheelchair and is lower than a person standing up.

37. The violations enumerated above may not be a complete list of the barriers, conditions or violations encountered by Plaintiff and/or which exist at the Property.

38. Plaintiff requires an inspection of the Property in order to determine all of the discriminatory conditions present at the Property in violation of the ADA.

39. The removal of the physical barriers, dangerous conditions and ADA violations alleged herein is readily achievable and can be accomplished and carried out without significant difficulty or expense. 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(iv); 42 U.S.C. § 12181(9); 28 C.F.R. § 36.304.

40. All of the violations alleged herein are readily achievable to modify to the Property into compliance with the ADA.

41. Upon information and good faith belief, the removal of the physical barriers and dangerous conditions present at the Property is readily achievable because the nature and cost of the modifications are relatively low.

42. Upon information and good faith belief, the removal of the physical barriers and dangerous conditions present at the Property is readily achievable because Defendant, LTD WESTHEIMER LLC, has the financial resources to make the necessary modifications. According to the Property Appraiser, the Appraised value of the Property is \$2,144,755.00.

43. The removal of the physical barriers and dangerous conditions present at the Property is also readily achievable because Defendant has available to it a \$5,000.00 tax credit

and up to a \$15,000.00 tax deduction from the IRS for spending money on accessibility modifications.

44. In instances where the 2010 ADAAG standards do not apply, the 1991 ADAAG standards apply, and all of the alleged violations set forth herein can be modified to comply with the 1991 ADAAG standards.

45. Plaintiff is without adequate remedy at law, is suffering irreparable harm, and reasonably anticipates that he will continue to suffer irreparable harm unless and until Defendant, LTD WESTHEIMER LLC, is required to remove the physical barriers, dangerous conditions and ADA violations that exist at the Property, including those alleged herein.

46. Plaintiff's requested relief serves the public interest.

47. The benefit to Plaintiff and the public of the relief outweighs any resulting detriment to Defendant, LTD WESTHEIMER LLC

48. Plaintiff's counsel is entitled to recover its reasonable attorney's fees and costs of litigation from Defendant, LTD WESTHEIMER LLC, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §§ 12188 and 12205.

49. Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 12188(a), this Court is provided authority to grant injunctive relief to Plaintiff, including the issuance of an Order directing Defendant, LTD WESTHEIMER LLC, to modify the Property to the extent required by the ADA.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays as follows:

- (a) That the Court find Defendant, LTD WESTHEIMER LLC, in violation of the ADA and ADAAG;
- (b) That the Court issue a permanent injunction enjoining Defendant, LTD WESTHEIMER LLC, from continuing their discriminatory practices;

- (c) That the Court issue an Order requiring Defendant, LTD WESTHEIMER LLC, to
 - (i) remove the physical barriers to access and (ii) alter the Property to make it readily accessible to and useable by individuals with disabilities to the extent required by the ADA;
- (d) That the Court award Plaintiff his reasonable attorneys' fees, litigation expenses and costs; and
- (e) That the Court grant such further relief as deemed just and equitable in light of the circumstances.

Dated: February 10, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Douglas S. Schapiro

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Southern District of Texas ID No. 3182479

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